

Single-occupancy vehicles clog highway

Recent traffic counts show that the large majority of vehicles along Island Highway are single occupancy.

Photo: Amy Dove/News staff

by [Amy Dove - Goldstream News Gazette](#)

March 02, 2010



The pinch point just got a little tighter.

One week into a year-long overhaul of Island Highway, commuters are flooding to the Trans-Canada Highway, backing up traffic from McKenzie Avenue to beyond the Millstream overpass in Langford.

Most drivers will have no one to gripe to though, as traffic counts show a resounding majority of cars are single-occupancy.

West Shore MLAs are hoping the congestion will frustrate drivers enough to demand a regional transit solution — whether that be HOV lanes on the highway, rail or bus options.

"None of them are without expense, but the cost of not planning for growth is that growth will arrive and we won't be ready," said John Horgan, NDP MLA for Juan de Fuca. "Our argument is more (people) are coming — look at the trends and build for that."

Traffic counts on Island Highway

before construction started Feb. 22 showed 2,548 cars travelling east toward Victoria in a two-hour period. Of those, 2,127, or 83 per cent, had one person in the vehicle.

One week later, three days into construction, the same location and time period netted 1,433 cars, 1,283 of which had one person inside. The numbers suggest people are moving on to the Trans-Canada Highway, said View Royal engineer Emmet McCusker.

"This is an unbelievable amount of traffic going through the community," said Maurine Karagianis, MLA for Esquimalt-Royal Roads. "Couple that with what is actually happening on the highway (as well)."

Ongoing discussions about potential for light rail transit or enhanced bus service are in the review stage although "the community all along the transportation corridor would agree the solutions are pretty simple and a good bona-fide

investment," Karagianis said. View Royal is encouraging people to carpool and use public transit to ease the congestion, but carpooling is not enough in an area that needs a real transit solution, she said.

BC Transit is in consultations for a regional rapid transit plan between the West Shore, Uptown in Saanich and downtown Victoria. A review of the E&N rail line by the Ministry of Transportation is expected within two months. Horgan predicts what will come of that is that the area isn't dense enough right now to support rail.

"We knew that. It's regrettable it took (MOT) a year to come to that conclusion," he said.

The provincial government is fixated on the fact there isn't enough density now, but there will be and the region needs to plan for it, Horgan said.

"We deserve just as much as the City of Vancouver to have greener, more sustainable transportation options," Karagianis added.

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Projects at work

Feb. 22

- CRD water services is installing a water main on Island Highway from Stormont Avenue to Helmcken Road. The five-week project will restrict traffic to one lane from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays.

May

- View Royal starts the Island Highway improvement project, adding sidewalks, bike lanes and widening the road from Stormont Avenue to Shoreline Drive. Traffic will be restricted to one lane between 6 a.m. and 3 p.m. weekdays for 10 months.